

# Explaining a Black Eye to Your Wife

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**M**y wife and daughter emerged from Italian customs in Rome's Leonardo da Vinci Fiumicino Airport. It had been about four months since I had seen my wife, and I was meeting my 6-week-old daughter for the first time. I was certain the shiner I was sporting would take center stage, and my wife didn't disappoint me.

"What happened to you?" was the first thing she asked.

I explained we had had lots of free time on our deployment to Sigonella from February to August. Because the overland crews were on waivers, I only had been getting about 25 to 40 flight hours a month. The rest of the time, I had been playing a lot of racquetball—a great way to get some aerobic exercise and to burn off the stress of getting ready for my 2P (2nd pilot) board. The racquetball courts conveniently were located indoors, near the BOQ, and there was some great competition in the squadron.

I had taken my own racquet and racquetball goggles with me on deployment, and despite their getting fogged up when I really broke a sweat, I wore them regularly. I'd played many times with guys who didn't wear goggles (because of the aforementioned fogginess). I even had borrowed a different style PPE from the gym to avoid my own glasses' limitations (they really were scratched up). Every time I had gotten exasperated with my goggles and left them resting on my forehead, the proverbial hackles had come up on the back of my neck, and I inevitably had pushed them back down.

One day, I was playing with a particularly good player, who regularly beat me. I was making him work this day, though, to get his points. We came close together as he moved to counter one of my shots, and as he reared back to slam the ball into

the low corner, I took the impact of his racquet in my eye.

Play stopped, and he worriedly asked me if I was all right. I was a little woozy but had been wearing my goggles, so the plastic had spread the blow over my nose and the bones around my eye. We took a break to get some water and then resumed play. After the game (I don't remember if I managed to beat him, but the odds are against it), he looked over and told me I had a trophy. My prize was only cosmetic: a decent black eye that immediately was noticeable but not so swollen as to keep me off the flight schedule.

Besides flying for the Navy as a selected reservist, I'm a commercial airline pilot, so I need my eyes; they're my livelihood. Only God knows what would have happened had my goggles been resting on my forehead that day. My buddy's backswing went straight for the center of my eyeball, and I'm sure it wouldn't have been pretty. ■

*The author was assigned to VP-8 at the time of this incident.*

## Resources:

- Safety When Swinging Your Racquet (tips to protect participants), [http://www.surfermall.com/rball/swing\\_safety.htm](http://www.surfermall.com/rball/swing_safety.htm)
- Proper Eye Protection Is Vital (re: the more than 40,000 athletes who suffer eye injuries annually), <http://www.barksdaleservices.com/RacquetballSafetyArticle.doc>
- Rules of Racquetball (rallies, disputes, types of games, points and outs, etc.), [http://www.owl.net.rice.edu/~mmathnov/rac\\_hand-out\\_9\\_1.pdf](http://www.owl.net.rice.edu/~mmathnov/rac_hand-out_9_1.pdf)